1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

228 464 132 for the minimum winter air temperature to be in the middle forties; during this period the sea water temperature in shallow water will be in the low sixties.

228 147 464 132 Pearl diving requires that the diver's body be almost continually in the water. From experience the Arabs have found that the surface water temperature has to be about 85° F. before continued deep-water diving is feasible; thus the main pearling season (*al-ghaws al-kabir,* or "great diving") averages four months — from June into the first week of October. During this time the maximum surface water temperature exceeds 90° F. (in August) off Hasa. O'Shea states that on the Trucial Coast *al-ghaws al-kabir* often lasts until late October, the water apparently remaining warmer longer there than further north.[19] In addition to *al-ghaws al-kabir,* there are two other seasons: the "cold diving" season (*al-ghaws al-barid*) running from April to May, and the *mujannah,* running from October to March. The smaller boats run out in the shallower (warmer) waters for *al-ghaws al-barid* and act as a barometer for the season, while the *mujannah* is worked by waders who work along the shore when the tide is out, many equipped with glass-bottom "look boxes."

527 228 For *al-ghaws al-kabir* the various fleets, whether from Kuwait, Bahrein, or the Trucial Coast, leave port en masse with flags flying, to the beating of drums and Arab chants. The few boats from the smaller ports slip out without fanfare. It is a stirring sight to see these fleets of dhows maneuver with their sweeps and then set forth under huge spreads of lateen sails, with their freshly oiled, burnt-brown hulls glistening across the aquamarine water, like some ancient Phoenician or Roman fleet.

228 502 An admiral represents the pearl fishing fleet of each port. It is the admiral's boat which leaves the port first, and the admiral's duty to determine when the water becomes too cold for continuous diving. It is considered improper (by the owners) for the *nakhoda* of any large vessel to leave the pearl banks before the admiral leaves.[20]

[19] R. O'Shea, *op. cit.,* p. 137.

[20] The admiral of al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, now works for the Arabian American Oil Company, for al-Khobar no longer sends vessels out to the pearl grounds.

3: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

FIG. 16—Emir Nasir of Darin with a season's crop of pearls from his pearling jalbuts.

Pearl oysters are found from low-tide level to 20 fathoms. There are pearl beds off the whole Arabian coast from Bahrein to Ras al Mish'ab, but the best banks are north and east of Bahrein Island, and the best beds between 5 and 10 fathoms. The beds are not charted; indeed, this would be useless, since they shift periodically. A bank may be sterile for several years and then suddenly produce the finest pearls of the season. The Arabs believe that the best pearls—the largest and whitest—come from deep water, though some of the more pessimistic say that the Persian Gulf never yields more than two first-class necklaces in any one season.

The pearling boats leave Bahrein, Kuweit, and the Trucial Coast of Oman for the main season en masse to drum beating and chants, but the few dhows from the Saudi Arabian ports slip out unceremoniously. The Bahrein fleet works up, the Kuweit fleet works down, and the small Saudi Arabian fleet works in the middle.

The *nakhoda* (captain) of a pearling dhow orients his craft at the edge of a bed so that when the anchor line is paid out, the dhow will drift across the bed. When the divers start to get only a few oysters, the dhow is allowed to drift a little. When it is completely across the bed, the crew moves it back to a fresh location with the sweeps, to the accompaniment of drum beating and chants. It is here that the nakhoda shows his real skill and knowledge, for he must keep his craft in virgin water.

Pearl diving in the Persian Gulf is essentially "skin diving." The diver wears only a loincloth and leather fingers to protect his fingers from sharp coral and shells; a horn noseclip and cotton or beeswax to stuff into his ears complete the "equipment." The use of drags, dredges, or compressed-air diving suits has been prohibited by the British, long the protectors of the Persian Gulf, and only the inhabitants of the Gulf—Arabs and Persians—can work the pearl fisheries.

4: Bowen C-5 (1960) 1961 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

point of vantage. Before every prayer the Arabs first perform the required Moslem ablutions of washing their hands, face, feet, etc., in sea water; then they go through the prayer ritual facing towards Mecca with their headcloth spread in front of them as a prayer rug. It is for determining the direction of Mecca that the compass on a large dhow is often most used! The first prayer is the dawn prayer said in the first greying light of dawn; the morning prayer takes place when the sun is close to the meridian; the afternoon prayer is called when the shadows begin to lengthen; the evening prayer is said shortly after the sun sets; finally, the night prayer ends the day several hours after sunset. The above applies to Moslem Persians and Indians as well as to the Arabs; obviously it does not apply to Hindus or sailors of other religions.

Eating is intimately related to Islamic religion for Arabs and other Moslem sailors, as their three meals come directly after the dawn, the morning, and the evening prayers. In the month of Ramadhan all faithful Moslems neither drink nor eat during the daylight hours; however, during Ramadhan all activities on land and on sea usually hit a low ebb. In other months breakfast consists for the Arabs of little more than a piece of unleavened bread with some sweet tea or water with which to wash it down. Lunch has more to offer, consisting of a mess of boiled rice with a flavoring of *ghee* (clarified butter) and curried or baked fish (if the ship has any fish aboard). The main portion of the meal is rice, which is served on a huge tray, or often simply on a palm leaf mat. The crew gathers around several of these trays or mats and makes quick work of the food, using no implements other than their right hand. They take a little fish (or meat if they are that fortunate), ball a small handful of rice around it and toss the ball deftly into their mouth, usually without losing a crumb. Nothing is ever wasted, as someone always scavenges the last morsel. Supper is essentially the same as lunch.

Often a feast is in order in port; this always calls for the slaughter of a sheep (or goat), a number of which are always kept alive on board. The sheep is usually slaughtered at dawn and is virtually dragged from its skin into a large iron pot, where it is boiled in water. The sheep or goat is the *pièce de résistance* and is served whole on a huge tray of rice. For a feast, a curry flavoring or raisins are often mixed with the rice. Various delicacies from the sheep, such as the heart, liver, lungs, and kidneys, are cooked separately and served in side dishes. As the feast starts, the sheep is methodically torn apart limb from limb and fiber by fiber. The meat is always eaten in the same manner: rice is balled around small bits of meat and tossed deftly into one's mouth with the right hand. In pulling